

## UN Ban Ki-Moon and his drought thesis of Darfur Conflict

By Abdullahi Osman El-Tom, Ph.D.

September 6, 2007 — In his first visit to Khartoum since his inauguration, September 3rd 07, UN Secretary Ban Ki-Moon engaged Albashir in a number of issues relating to Sudan intractable problems. Top among those issues was Darfur. For somebody like Mr. Ki-Moon and who has risen to one of the highest positions on earth, one would have expected him to show a better depth in reading conflicts like Darfur, and sounder resolve to deal with perpetrators of violence against humanity. Mr. Ki-Moon failed on both of these counts as he reflected on the causes of Darfur conflict and outlined his prophecies for its solution. Commenting on Darfur, Mr. Ki-Moon went:

"You all know that the conflict in Darfur began, long ago, in part because of drought. When the rains failed, farmers and herders fell into competition for an increasingly scarce resource. The decisions of man to wage war over these precious natural resources further compounded other factors and challenges."

But the fact remains. Lack of water, and a scarcity of resources in general, have contributed to steady worsening of Sudan's troubles. As part of the solution, the Government with international assistance will have to ensure that the people of Darfur have access to vital natural resources – water being chief among them. The UN stands ready to assist in this effort".

If the UN Secretary was intending to appease his host by such revelation at the exposes of his office, not to mention the people of Darfur, he could not have done any better. It is difficult to contemplate that Ki-Moon did not understand the essence of his thesis. Here it is in a nutshell. Darfur problem is caused by nature in the guise of drought. As a result, Darfur people were forced into fighting over limited resources. Fortunately, modern science, spearheaded by the Egyptian scientist, Professor Albaz and others has discovered substantial water reserve in Darfur. And if funds are made available for exploring this vast water reserve, the problem will be brought to an end.

His Excellency's theory is not only flawed. It is simply embarrassing and laughable. This kind of natural causation of human conflicts is common among dictators and genocide apologists. Not so among knowledgeable people like Mr. Ki-Moon. Worse than that, Mr. Ki-Moon must realize that he shares his drought thesis with Khartoum controlled media, and which remained faithful to this line of "logic" since the inception of Darfur conflict.

At the beginning of Darfur conflict, I had the misfortune of listening to a debate in Radio Umduraman, Sudan. The programme hosted two prominent pro-government Darfur leaders belonging to the two sides of the divide. The two guests and their programme host arrived at an interesting reading of Darfur crisis. Namely, that the two sides of Darfur conflict lived together and in harmony of centuries until the devil, or in the Islamic language "Satan" intruded between them and hence the eruption of Darfur problem. The entire programme was then wasted on the clearly innocent Satan and how he spoilt the harmonious life of the African and Arab Darfurians. Neither the programme host nor his guests were able to state that what was depicted as Satan was nothing other than Albashir and his fellow Ministers. Albashir would be right to argue that he was not the only Satan who caused Darfur problem. After all, he only exacerbated a problem that he inherited from his predecessors, ranging from Ex-Sudan President Abdalla Khalil to Nimerie and Amahdi.

Mr. Ki-Moon must also realize that the Sudanese people and Darfur citizens in particular will not fall foul to such flawed interpretation of Darfur conflict. In fact, Sudan is not new to natural explanation of human-caused calamities. During the famine of 1984/1985, Ex-President of Sudan Nimerie tried the same deceitful tactic. Addressing his nation at the height of the famine, Nimerie told his subjects: that "Among all nations, God had selected them for a famine test and their redemption depended on their endurance of that test".

Well, history has shown that the Sudanese people were no fools. They took no pride on being the "chosen people of God on earth" and who would be honoured by being elected for a heavenly endurance test. Instead, the starving people dumped their dictator.

The fallacy of Mr. Ki-Moon's drought thesis is so clear-cut that it needs little to debunk. But let us remind Mr. Ki-Moon that drought is not a preserve of Darfur. It has struck across the African continent but admittedly harder in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, none of the other countries affected has experienced what we now witness in Darfur.

Mr. Ki-Moon's second part of the thesis relates to his solution of Darfur crisis. That, as he says, lies in expanding newly found natural resources- in particular water. Again Mr. Ki-Moon needs not step beyond Africa to see the inaccuracy of his prophecy. Under situation of injustice, new resources tend to pose more problems than otherwise. This is so evident in Africa from Biafra in Nigeria to Abeye in Sudan. In both of these cases extra resources (oil) made already existing problems more intractable.

If Mr. Ki-Moon wants to be true to the spirit of his office, he better musters courage and call things by their own names. Darfur problem is not caused by drought and not by God either – to use the Sudanese idiom. The problem lies clearly and squarely at Albashir's Presidential Palace. I hope Mr. Ki-Moon is able to say that the next time they meet. We will remain engaged awaiting his coming speech on Darfur.

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